


Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

 **MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF DELHI**
Department of Veterinary Services

PUBLIC NOTICE

**Don't Let Stray Dogs Become a Threat
Help MCD & NGOs
in Sterilization Drive**



The general public is hereby informed that in order to control the population of stray dogs in the city, Municipal Corporation of Delhi is carrying out the programme of sterilization and immunization of stray dogs through the following 10 NGOs:-

- ✦ Sanjay Gandhi Animal Care Centre (Raja Garden)
- ✦ Friendicoes - Seca (Defence Colony)
- ✦ Sonadi Charitable Trust (Najafgarh)
- ✦ Jeevashram Foundation (Rajokan)
- ✦ Jeevan Jyoti Animal Welfare Society (Pooth)
- ✦ Animal India Trust (Jai Vihar)
- ✦ Samrakshan Trust (Prahadpur & Ghazipur)
- ✦ Cure and Care Animal Help Foundation (Tilangpur Kotla)
- ✦ Circle of Animal Lovers (Neb Sarai & Tuglakabad)
- ✦ Pet Animal Welfare Society (Masood Pur)

As per notification No. 929 dated 24.12.2001 issued by Government of India, the dogs after sterilization and immunization are to be released in the same area/locality from where they had been picked up. Complaints are being received by the MCD to pick-up the dogs and relocate them to other localities / areas, which is not permissible under the above said notified rules.

In view of above, general public is hereby informed to cooperate with the workers of NGOs and Municipal employees while they visit the areas for picking-up the stray dogs for sterilization and immunization, which is essential to control their population in the city. It should be our endeavour to work in this direction together keeping in view the forthcoming Commonwealth Games, 2010.

It is also requested not to insist to release/relocate the dogs picked up from one area to another area. For any information in this regard, you may contact at telephone number-23974321

Director
(Veterinary Services)

R.O. No. 583/DPI/2008-09

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Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

The Animal Birth Control, Rules (Delhi)

Animal Birth Control (ABC)

Delhi

RULES

In view of the enactment of the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001, under Section 38 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, which contains mandates that are at complete variance with Section 399 (1) (b) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi cannot destroy dogs at will.

The Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001, The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, and even The Delhi Police Act, 1978, were enacted later in point of time, than the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957. They record a progression of the law, and in the matter of dealing with dogs, the mandates contained in The Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules, 2001, shall OBVIOUSLY prevail.

The relevant portions, i.e. Rule 6 and Rule 7, are highlighted.

Rule 6 clearly envisages that even if the Municipal Corporation thinks it expedient to control street dog populations, IT CANNOT RESORT TO KILLING OR DISLOCATING. It can only sterilize and immunize the dogs, and then leave them at the locations that they had been picked up from.

Rule 7 deals with the procedure to be followed upon receipt of a complaint. Please also note, the M.C.D. cannot just pick up dogs, simply because some persons don't like their being around. Even the dogs that are complained about can only be sterilized and immunized, and then left back at the locations that they had been picked up from.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001

THE ANIMAL BIRTH CONTROL (DOGS) RULES, 2001¹

In exercise of the powers conferred by the sub-sections (1) and (2) of section 38 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (59 of 1960), the Central Government hereby makes the following rules, namely:—

1. Short title and commencement.—(1) These rules may be called the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001.

(2) They shall come into force on the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

2. Definition.—In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires,—

- (a) "Act" means the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 (59 of 1960);
- (b) "Animal Welfare Organisation" means and includes the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and any other welfare organisation for animals which is registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 (21 of 1860) or any other corresponding law for the time being in force and which is recognised by the Animal Welfare Board of India;
- (c) "Board" means the Animal Welfare Board of India, established under section 4 and as reconstituted under section 5A of the Act;
- (d) "Committee" means a committee appointed under these rules;
- (e) "Local Authority" means a municipal committee, district board or other authority for the time being invested by law with the control and administration of any matters within a specified local area;
- (f) "owner" means the owner of an animal and includes any other person in possession or custody of such animal whether with or without the consent of the owner;
- (g) "Veterinary doctor" means a person who holds a degree of a recognised veterinary college and is registered with the Indian Veterinary Council.

3. Classification of dogs and their sterilisation.—(1) All dogs shall be classified in one of the following two categories (i) pet dogs, (ii) street dogs.

(2) The owner of pet dogs shall be responsible for the controlled breeding, immunisation, sterilisation and licensing in accordance with these rules and the law for the time being in force within a specified local area.

(3) The street dogs shall be sterilised and immunised by participation of Animal Welfare Organisations, private individuals and the local authority.

1. Vide S.O. 1256(E), dated 24th December, 2001, published in the Gazette of India, Extra., Pt. II, Sec. 3(ii), dated 24th December, 2001.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

116

Animal Laws of India

[Rule 4

4. Formation of Committee.—A monitoring committee consisting of the following persons shall be constituted by the local authority, namely—

- (a) Commissioner/Chief of the local authority, who shall be the *ex-officio* Chairman of the Committee;
- (b) a representative of the Public Health Department of the local authority;
- (c) a representative of the Animal Welfare Department if any of the local authority;
- (d) a veterinary doctor;
- (e) a representative of the district Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA);
- (f) at least two representatives from the Animal Welfare Organisations operating within the said local authority.

5. Functions of the Committee.—The Committee constituted under rule 4 shall be responsible for planning and management of dog control programme in accordance with these rules. The Committee may,—

- (a) issue instructions for catching, transportation, sheltering, sterilisation, vaccination, treatment and release of sterilised vaccinated or treated dogs;
- (b) authorise veterinary doctor to decide on case to case basis the need to put to sleep critically ill or fatally injured or rabid dogs in a painless method by using sodium pentathol. Any other method is strictly prohibited;
- (c) create public awareness, solicit co-operation and funding;
- (d) provide guidelines to pet dog owners and commercial breeders from time to time;
- (e) get a survey done of the number of street dogs by an independent agency;
- (f) take such steps for monitoring the dog bite cases to ascertain the reasons of dog bite, the area where it took place and whether it was from a stray or a pet dog;
- (g) keep a watch on the national and international developments in the field of research pertaining to street dogs' control and management, development of vaccines and cost effective methods of sterilisation, vaccination, etc.

6. Obligations of the local authority.—(1) The local authority shall provide for—

- (a) establishment of a sufficient number of dog pounds including animal kennels/shelters which may be managed by animal welfare organisations;
- (b) requisite number of dog vans with ramps for the capture and transportation of street dogs;

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

Rule 7]

The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules, 2001

117

- (c) one driver and two trained dog catchers to be provided for each dog van;
 - (d) an ambulance-cum-clinical van to be provided as mobile center for sterilisation and immunisation;
 - (e) incinerators to be installed by the local authority for disposal of carcasses.
 - (f) periodic repair of shelter or pound.
- (2) If the Municipal Corporation or the local authority thinks it expedient to control street dog population, it shall be incumbent upon them to sterilise and immunise street dogs with the participation of animal welfare organisations, private individuals and the local authority.
- (3) The animal welfare organisations shall be reimbursed the expenses of sterilisation/immunisation at a rate to be fixed by the Committee on fortnightly basis based on the number of sterilisation/immunisation done.

7. Capturing/sterilisation/immunisation/release.—(1) Capturing of dogs shall be based on:—

- (a) Specific complaints (for which the local authority in consultation with the Monitoring Committee shall set up a dog control cell to receive complaints about dog nuisance, dog bites and information about rabid dogs); and
- (b) General:—
 - (i) On receipt of specific complaint about nuisance or dog bite the same shall be attended on priority basis, irrespective of the area from which the complaint comes. On receipt of such complaint the details such as name of the complainant, his complete address, date and time of complaint, nature of complaint etc. shall be recorded in a register to be maintained for permanent record;
 - (ii) Capturing for general purpose will be on such dates and time to be specified by the Committee.

(2) The dog capturing squad shall consist of—

- (i) The driver of the dog van;
- (ii) Two or more trained employees of the local authority who are trained in capturing of dogs;
- (iii) One representative of any of the animal welfare organisation.

Each member of the dog squad shall carry, a valid identity card issued by the local authority. The dog capturing squad will be accompanied by a representative of an Animal Welfare Organisation nominated for the purpose.

(3) On receipt of specific complaint or for capturing dogs in normal course the dog squad will visit the concerned area, capture the dogs identified by the complainant in case of complaint-oriented capturing and other dogs in case of general capturing. All the dogs caught will be tagged for identification purposes and to ensure that the dogs are released in the same area after sterilisation and

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

vaccination. Only stipulated number of dogs, according to the Animal Birth Control Program target, shall be caught by the van. A record of dogs captured shall be maintained in a register, mentioning therein the name of the area/locality, date and time of capture, names of persons in the dogs squad on that particular day and details about dogs captured such as number of male dogs, number of female dogs, number of puppies etc.

(4) The dogs shall be captured by using humane methods such as lassoing or soft-loop animal catchers such as those prescribed under the provisions of Prevention of Cruelty (Capture of Animals) Rules, 1979.

(5) While the dogs are being captured in any locality the representative of the local authority or of the Animal Welfare Organisation accompanying the dog squad will make announcements on a public address system that dogs are being captured from the area for the purpose of sterilisation and immunisation and will be released in the same area after sterilisation and immunisation. The announcement may also briefly educate the residents of the area about the dog control programme and solicit the support of all the residents reassuring them that the local authority is taking adequate steps for their safety.

(6) The captured dogs shall be brought to the dog kennels/dog pounds managed by the Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs). On reaching the dog pounds all the dogs shall be examined by the veterinarians and healthy and sick dogs should be segregated. Sick dogs should be given proper treatment in the hospitals run by Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA)/other institutions and only after they are treated they should be sterilised and vaccinated. The dogs will be sterilised/vaccinated under the supervision of the veterinarians of the hospital run by the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), Animal Welfare Organisation or other dog shelters. After necessary period of follow up, the dogs shall be released at the same place or locality from where they were captured and the date, time and place of their release shall be recorded. The representative of Animal Welfare Organisations (AWOs) shall accompany the dog squad at the time of release also.

(7) At a time only one lot of dogs shall be brought for sterilisation, immunisation at one dog kennel or dog pound and these dogs shall be from one locality. Two lots from different areas or localities shall not be mixed at the same dog pound or dog kennel.

(8) The dog kennel must have sufficient space for proper housing and free movement of dogs. The place should have proper ventilation and natural lighting and must be kept clean. Adults and puppies must be housed separately and amongst the adults the males and females also should be housed separately. Adequate arrangement for drinking water and food shall be made for dogs while in captivity.

(9) Female dogs found to be pregnant shall not undergo abortion (irrespective of stage of pregnancy) and sterilisation and should be released till they have the litter.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

8. Identification and Recording.—Sterilised dogs shall be vaccinated before release and the ears of these dogs should either be clipped and/or tattooed for being identified as sterilised or immunised dogs. In addition, the dogs may be given token or nylon collars for identification and detailed records of such dogs shall be maintained. Branding of dogs would not be permitted.

9. Euthanasia of Street Dogs.—Incurably ill and mortally wounded dogs as diagnosed by a qualified veterinarian appointed by the committee shall be euthanised during specified hours in a humane manner by administering sodium pentathol for adult dogs and Thiopental Intraperitoneal for puppies by a qualified veterinarian or euthanised in any other humane manner approved by Animal Welfare Board of India. No dog shall be euthanised in the presence of another dog. The person responsible for euthanising shall make sure that the animal is dead, before disposal.

10. Furious or dumb rabid dogs.—(1) On the receipt of complaints from the public to the Dog Control Cell of the Local Authority or on its own, the dog squad of the Local Authority would catch such dogs, suspected to be rabid.

(2) The caught dog would then be taken to the pound where it would be isolated in an isolation ward.

(3) The suspected rabid dog would then be subjected to inspection by a panel of two persons *i.e.*—

(i) a veterinarian surgeon appointed by the Local Authority; and

(ii) a representative from an Animal Welfare Organisation.

(4) If the dog is found to have a high probability of having rabies it would be isolated till it dies a natural death. Death normally occurs within 10 days of contracting rabies. Premature killings of suspected rabid dogs therefore prevents the true incidence of rabies from being known and appropriate action being taken.

(5) If the dog is found not to have rabies but some other disease it would be handed over to the AWOs who will take the necessary action to cure and rehabilitate the dog.

11. Disposal of carcasses.—The carcasses of such euthanised dogs shall be disposed of in an incinerator to be provided by the local authority.

12. Guidelines for breeders.—(i) A breeder must be registered with Animal Welfare Board of India.

(ii) Breeder must maintain full record of the number of pups born/died from individual bitches.

(iii) Breeder must maintain record of the person buying the pups. He should ensure that the buyer has the required knowledge for the upkeep of the pups.

13. Application of rules where local bye-laws etc., exist.—If there is in force in any area to which these rules extend, any Act, rule, regulation or bye-law

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

120

Animal Laws of India

[Rule 13

made under any law for the time being in force by the State or the Local Authority in respect of any of the matters for which provision is made in these rules, such rule, regulation or bye-law shall to the extent to which—

- (a) it contains provisions less irksome to the animal than those contained in these rules shall prevail;
 - (b) it contains provisions more irksome to the animal than those contained in these rules, be of no effect.
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Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

Canine ABC Programme - The necessity of it and what has to be done Published by AWBI, 2010



CANINE ABC PROGRAMME: THE NECESSITY OF IT AND WHAT HAS TO BE DONE



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CANINE ABC PROGRAMME: THE NECESSITY OF IT AND WHAT HAS TO BE DONE

The Animal Welfare Board of India (henceforth AWBI) has taken up the implementation of the animal birth control (henceforth ABC) programme for canines on a national scale with two objectives—to end the presence of stray dogs on roads and public spaces and free India from the incidence of rabies by 2020. Under this programme, stray dogs are picked up, neutered, vaccinated against rabies and released in the respective areas from where they had been captured.

The ABC programme constitutes the only effective and humane method of controlling stray dog populations. In its report, *Technical Report Series 931*, WHO's Expert Consultation on Rabies, which met in Geneva from 5 to 8 October 2004, states:

"Since the 1960s, ABC programmes coupled with rabies vaccination have been advocated as a method to control urban street male and female dog populations and ultimately human rabies in Asia. The rationale is to reduce the dog population turnover as well as the number of dogs susceptible to rabies and limit aspects of male dog behaviour (such as dispersal and fighting) that facilitate the spread of rabies. The culling of dogs during these programmes may be counterproductive as sterilized, vaccinated dogs may be destroyed"¹.

The killing of stray dogs, which many municipal bodies advocate, serves no purpose. Dr K. Bogel, Chief Veterinary, Public Health, Division of Communicable diseases, World Health

Organization (WHO), Switzerland, and John Hoyt, then President, World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), as well as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), made this clear in their joint preface to the *Guidelines for Dog Population Management* (Henceforth *Guidelines*), released by the WHO and WSPA in May 1990. They stated,

"All too often, authorities confronted by problems caused by these [stray] dogs have turned to mass destruction in the hope of finding a quick solution, only to find that the destruction had to continue, year after year, with no end in sight"².

According to the *Guidelines*, killing was practised in the past to a large extent "simply because knowledge of the composition and dynamics of dog populations" as well as "crucial data on the density, composition and turnover of dog population" were lacking". The *Guidelines* add, "Removal and killing of dogs should never be considered as the most effective way of dealing with the problem of surplus dogs in the community: it has no effect on the root cause of the problem, which is overproduction of dogs"³.

In its Eighth Report, (*WHO Technical Report Series 824*), the WHO's Expert Committee on Rabies, which met in Geneva from 24 to 30 September 1991, had stated:

"The committee expressed its appreciation of the long-term engagement of the WHO in developing methodologies related to dog ecology and dog population management. Considerable experience has been gained in projects coordinated by the WHO in Ecuador, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tunisia and other ecological studies conducted in South America and Asia. However, data collection, health systems and operational research need to be continued in other areas and countries with different social and ecological conditions.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

“On the basis of the results obtained so far in these studies, the committee recommended drastic changes in rabies control policies as compared to those previously adopted and practised by most national authorities and communities. There is no evidence that the removal of dogs has ever had a significant impact on dog population densities and the spread of rabies. The population turnover of dogs may be so high that even the highest recorded removal rates (about 15 per cent of the dog population) are easily compensated by survival rates. In addition, dog removal may be unacceptable to local communities. Therefore, this approach should not be used in large-scale control programmes unless ecological and sociological studies show it is feasible”⁴.

Several studies on the ground by eminent veterinary practitioners and surgeons have underscored the futility of killing. Dr. J.F. Reece writes in “Dogs and Dog Control in Developing Countries”⁵, “In Delhi, a concerted effort at dog removal killed a third of the straying dogs with no reduction in dog population”. It has been the same experience elsewhere in India. In his paper, “ABC responsible for decline in human rabies cases”⁶, Dr. Chinny Krishna, co-founder and chairman of the Blue Cross Society of India at the time of writing, cites the instance of the Madras Corporation’s catch and kill programme that began in 1860. He quotes Dr. Theodore Bhaskaran, a former Post Master General of Madras, as stating in an article, “In the 1970s, the number of stray dogs destroyed by the corporation was so high that the Central Leather Institute, Madras, designed products—such as neckties and wallets—from dog skins”. Dr. Krishna has pointed out elsewhere that the number of dogs killed by the Corporation had gone up to 30,000 per year by 1995. Yet the city’s stray dog population and the incidence of human rabies continued to rise.

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (M.C.G.M.) killed 4,49,568 stray dogs in the period between 1984 and 1994, in a bid to bring down the city’s stray dog population, and thereby control what it called “dog nuisance”. Yet, neither this nor expenditure of Rs 1,67,65,497 on mass killing of dogs, led to any reduction in the incidence of human deaths from rabies in Mumbai, which averaged at around 50 per year. Nor was there any decline in the population of stray dogs. Hence, on March 25, 1994, the M.C.G.M, without any direction from any court, issued a circular recording its decision to stop mass killing of stray dogs, because “... in spite of killing so many dogs every year, we have not been able to bring down their population in Greater Bombay. This is because of their very high birth rate.”

It has been the same experience throughout the world. Dr. Reece writes:

“In Hongkong approximately 20,000 dogs were killed by the Government and another 13,000 by welfare organisations every year...with little impact on the free-roaming dog population. In Ecuador, the elimination of 12-25 per cent of the dog population every year for five years did not reduce the dog population (WHO 1988). In rural Australia, a 76 per cent reduction in the free roaming rural dog population failed to drastically reduce their population, and the number of free-roaming dogs returned to their pre-cull level within a year (Beck 2005). In Kathmandu, street dogs have been poisoned for at least 50 years with little long-term effect on their population”⁷.

Why killing does not help

It is not difficult to understand why killing does not help in reducing stray-dog populations. The *Guidelines* clearly state:

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

"Each habitat has a specific carrying capacity for each species. This specific carrying capacity essentially depends on the availability, quality and distribution of the resources (shelter, food, water) for the species concerned. The density of population for higher vertebrates (including dogs) is almost always near the carrying capacity of the environment. Any reduction in the population density through additional mortality is rapidly compensated by better reproduction and survival. In other words, when dogs are removed, the survivors' life expectancy increases because they have better access to resources"⁸

The argument that such a situation will not arise if all stray dogs in a city or State or country are killed at one go holds little water. For one thing, nowhere has such a venture succeeded. For another, with all dogs killed, dogs from other areas will move in. For dogs are territorial. Those living in one area will not allow dogs from other areas to come in. That is why one notices that each area has its own resident stray canines with very rare additions to their ranks. With sterilized and vaccinated dogs returned to their areas keeping unsterilized and unvaccinated dogs out, the authorities implementing the ABC programme can progressively move into other areas leaving each of the earlier ones to be guarded by sterilized and vaccinated dogs. Proceeding area by area they can cover an entire city or country within a pre-fixed period—returning only occasionally to areas already covered to take care of sundry unsterilized and unvaccinated dogs that might have sneaked in.

If strays from an area, say A, are killed or relocated—released in another area or put in dog pounds—stray dogs from other areas will take their place. Those conducting the ABC programme will then have to return to A, where the

newcomers, with no other takers for the resources of the area, will have proliferated rapidly, and begin neutering all over again. Indeed, the experience of A will be repeated in all other areas and the exercise of sterilising and vaccinating stray dogs will have to be carried on indefinitely with no end in sight.

Why back in the same area?

No ABC programme can succeed if neutered and vaccinated dogs are not released in the places from which they had been picked up. There is also another aspect. Stray dogs that are familiar with their surroundings, know who is a friend and who is not, what spells danger, the places where food and shelter are available, and have referral households that support them. They are at peace with their environment. In contrast, stray dogs moving into a new area are often aggressive because they are under attack from local dogs, cannot distinguish between friend and foe, do not know where they can find food and shelter and are hence always on the edge.

Besides, the ABC programme itself lowers the aggression level in dogs and bitches. Since sterilized bitches do not come on heat, fights among dogs over bitches, which raise their aggression levels, do not occur during mating seasons when they are most frequent. This drastically reduces the number of instances in which a higher level of aggression leads to a greater intolerance of provocation and biting of people. Also, since sterilized bitches do not litter, one does not witness the rise in their aggression level that occurs when they are guarding their puppies against threats—which are many, given the way in which humans treat animals. Significantly, many get bitten when stray dogs are provoked by people teasing and/hitting them or trying to take away their puppies.

Gradual decline

Most people who oppose the ABC programme do not know the rationale behind it or the way it works. They feel it

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

is futile because sterilized and vaccinated dogs are back in their localities. There is decline but it occurs gradually as sterilized dogs live out their biological spans of life. It is relevant here to look at the experience of Jaipur where the ABC programme, started as a pilot project in 1994 by an NGO, Help in Suffering, was expanded to cover the entire city in 1996. According to Dr. J.F. Reece and Dr. S.K. Chawla, "During the eight-year study period [1994 to 2002] a decline in the neighbourhood [read stray] dog population of 28 per cent was recorded between the peak and the last survey—an annual average of 3.5 per cent"⁹.

One needs to explain to people the inevitability of the slow decline in numbers and the critical importance of having these dogs back, and the fact that no instant solution can be found for issues that have been with societies for centuries. Over sixty years after Independence from British rule poverty still stalks India despite the massive development efforts that have been undertaken. Stray dogs have existed in India ever since once can remember. The great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* mention them.

In the *Mahabharata*, a little brown dog appeared from nowhere and began following the five Pandavas as they set forth from their capital of Hastinapur in their last journey along with their common wife, Draupadi. The latter and four Pandavas fell dead as they climbed the slopes of Mount Meru on their way to heaven. Yudhishtira alone continued walking, followed by the dog. Suddenly, Indra, the king of Gods, arrived in his flying chariot and told Yudhishtira that his exemplary life had earned him the honour of entering heaven in his mortal body and he had come to take him. Yudhishtira refused to go without the dog. Not only that, he said that abandoning the dog, which had followed him all the way, and which would die without him, would be a sin worse than that of killing a Brahmin. This particularly needs to be noted because, in that age, the

killing of a Brahmin was perhaps the most dastardly crime possible!

The dog then transformed itself into Dharma, the God of Virtue, who said he was following the Pandavas in the form of the dog and this was his last test for Yudhishtira, who would not have been allowed into heaven if he had agreed to abandon a faithful companion who had followed him all the way.

In Krittibas Ojha's Bengali rendering of the *Ramayana*, Ram not only gave a hearing to a stray dog that had complained of having been hit with a stick by a Sanyasin but, at the instance of his courtiers, administered to the latter the punishment the dog had prescribed. As the punishment—the crowning of the Sanyasin as the king of Kalinjar—stunned the courtiers, the dog explained that, under a curse by Lord Shiva, every king of Kalinjar was reborn as a dog!

Clearly, the presence of stray dogs, which is as old as the epics, cannot be ended in a day! While the effect of a sustained, area-wise implementation of the ABC programme takes time to be felt in terms of a reduction in the population of stray dogs, one can see it in the form of a decline in the number of human rabies cases. This is because neutering is accompanied by vaccination of stray dogs against rabies. Significantly, WHO's *Technical Report Series 931*, points out:

"Mass canine vaccination campaigns have been the most effective measures for controlling canine rabies. Since the 1980s, national mass canine vaccination campaigns have been conducted generally on an annual basis in Latin America, with high coverage (around 80%) in a short period of time (no more than one week). Over the region, approximately 45 million dogs a year have been vaccinated, resulting in a significant decline in canine and human rabies. The organisation of the campaign is based on inter-sectoral collaboration,

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

community participation and strong media support. Three committees (national, sub-regional and local) have been established to deal with technical and logistical aspects of the campaigns. The success and the sustainability of these campaigns in Latin America have been due to political commitment, acquisition and supply of canine vaccines by ministries of health, free delivery of these vaccines, local level commitment in the planning and execution of the campaigns and the effective coordination and supervision of these campaigns by the health services."

Declining incidence of rabies

If Latin America can vaccinate approximately 45 million dogs a year, there is no reason why India cannot vaccinate 70 per cent¹⁰ of its stray dog population estimated (!) at between 22 and 25 million¹¹. In India, the incidence of rabies has declined sharply wherever the ABC programme has been seriously implemented. Dr Chinny Krishna points out that the incidence of rabies in Chennai declined from 120 in 1996, the year in which the programme was launched in the city, to five in 2003¹².

A report in the Chennai edition of *The Times of India* of June 10, 2009, records further improvement. According to it, there was no human deaths from rabies in the last one year. The report quotes the Chennai Corporation's Health Officer, Dr.B. Kuganantham as saying, "There has been no case of rabies in the last one year. Complaints of stray dogs have come down drastically."¹³

In Jaipur's walled city, the number declined from 10 in 1994, the year the ABC programme was started as a pilot project, to nil in 2001 and 2002 respectively. In 2000, when the ABC programme was launched in Bangalore, the number of human deaths from rabies was 20 in the 100 wards of the

Bangalore Mahanagara Palike or Bangalore Municipal Corporation (BMP)—which became Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on February 1, 2007, following the incorporation of several peripheral areas into its territory. The figure came down to 11 in 2001, two in 2002 and three in 2003¹⁴. There was not a single human death from rabies in the financial years 2003-04, 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 (up to February 28)¹⁵.

This led to a marked fall in the consumption of anti-rabies vaccines for humans in Bangalore. According to a report by Sahana Charan and Afshan Yasmeen in the Bangalore edition of *The Hindu* of March 11, 2007 only 1980 cases of dog bites were reported in January and 942 in February within the city limits while medical experts put the number at 6,000 every month in the city. They quoted a doctor at the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike's referral hospital at Banashankari as saying, "We used up more than 55,000 vials of ARV vaccine from April 2005 to March 2006. But from April 2006 till date, we have used only 30,000 vials. This means that the number of cases [of dog bites] is less this time"¹⁶.

Even if one questions the actual figures in *The Hindu* report, there can be no doubt that there had been a substantial decline. According to a reply to an application by Gopi Shankar under the Right to Information Act (RIA/PR/31/07-08 dated 11/04/07), by Chief Health Officer BBMP, the annual expenditure on anti-rabies vaccines declined from Rs.116,57,660 in 2005-06 to Rs. 77,84,347 in 2006-07. The decline works out at Rs. 38,73,313, which is substantial. The reply shows a mark decline in the use of human anti-rabies vaccine too.

The number of vials used was 50,590 in 2005-06 when Rabipur was used and 35,640 in 2006-07 Verorab was used. The decline in consumption in 2006-07 appears even more impressive if one considers that 67,759 (7,480 and 60,279) vials were used in 2004-05 when Abhayrab and Rabipur were used.

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

Three practical methods

Bangalore's example once again underlines the fact that the ABC programme has produced results wherever it has been seriously implemented, notwithstanding the fact that the environmental factors have been invariably adverse. The importance of this becomes clear on recalling that WHO's *Technical Report Series 931* identifies three practical methods of dog population management as "movement restriction, habitat control and reproduction control"¹⁷. Movement restriction, according to the *Guidelines*, involves the prevention of restricted or supervised dogs or pet family dogs, from cutting loose to either mate and return or merge into the stray dog population¹⁸.

As for habitat control, we have seen that, according to the *Guidelines*, the carrying capacity of each habitat for each species is determined by the "availability, distribution and the quality of resources (shelter, food, water) for the species concerned". Effective removal of garbage would eliminate an important source of food for stray dogs. The *Guidelines* recommend fencing of dumps and enforcement of garbage disposal regulations in locations like markets, dumps and camping grounds where waste and garbage are concentrated. These also recommend organisation of garbage disposal, education of people and enforcement of regulations¹⁹ where the presence of waste material and garbage is widespread over the entire human habitation area. Reproduction control can only be achieved through a systematic and sustained implementation of the ABC programme.

Garbage disposal in most Indian cities is hardly efficient. Besides, many families neglect their pet dogs. They often escape into the streets and impregnate stray bitches whose puppies add to the stray dog population. They also account for a substantial percentage of instances of dogs biting humans. For example, according to information provided by BBMP in response to an application by Gopi Shankar under the RTI Act (RIA/PR/27/c/07-08 dated 30-04-07) pet and stray dogs bit

10,146 and 12,794 persons respectively between April 2003 and March 2004. Between April 2004 and March 2005, pet and stray dogs bit 16,220 and 16,747 persons respectively. The figures for the two categories were 12,294 and 15,363 in 2005-06 and 7,147 and 10,651 in 2006-07.

A report from Pune states that the number of dog bite cases reported at Sassoon Hospital rose from 5,600 to an alarming 8,751 in 2002. It adds, "Till May 2003, the hospital had a total of 3,815 dog-bite patients. However, according to the hospital medical officer, Namdeo Patil, 70 per cent of dog bite cases were from pet dogs"²⁰.

Miles to go

Clearly, a great deal has to be done to ensure that those keeping pet dogs look after them properly, which includes treating them with affection, feeding them adequately, not driving them to debility and death through excessive breeding, and taking care of their medical and other needs. Similarly, a great deal has to be done in regard to the implementation of the ABC programme. The WHO and the WSPA announced the *Guidelines* as early as May 1990. While the ABC programme was introduced on a local basis in cities like Delhi in 1993, Jaipur in 1994, Chennai in 1996, Mumbai in 1999 and Bangalore in 2000, there was nothing approaching a national policy to implement it until as late as 2001. It was in the December of that year that the Government of India put in place a mandatory legal basis for it by promulgating the Animal Birth Control (Dog) Rules.

Unfortunately, progress on the ground has been slow. As things are now, the programme is being implemented only in the metropolitan cities, and that too not on an adequate scale. Funds, infrastructural inadequacies, including the lack of a sufficient number of trained surgeons, are important constraints. So is lack of public awareness. While the union and state

Animal Birth Control (ABC) – Municipal Corporation

governments have an important role to play in providing funds and infrastructure and training, NGOs involved in the implementation of the ABC programme have to extend their own reach, enhance their own capacities and, especially, play a key role in raising public awareness about the importance of the programme and enlisting community support for it.

Community support is particularly important given the need to annually revaccinate sterilized dogs against rabies. The problem is catching them. As the *Guidelines* point out, "In general there are very few areas where dogs have no referral household and no attachment to at least one person, but the level of supervision may be very variable....". In India, there are many organisations and people who feed and take care of neighbourhood stray dogs. Their help should be enlisted in revaccination drives and, where necessary, Resident Welfare Associations and other similar bodies should help them to extend their activities.

Endnotes

- ¹ WHO, *Technical Report Series 931*, WHO Expert Consultation on Rabies, WHO, Geneva, 2005, p.34.
- ² WHO, *Guidelines for Dog Population Management*, WHO, Geneva, 1990, p. 1.
- ³ Ibid, p.74.
- ⁴ WHO, *Technical Report Series 824*, Who Expert Committee on Rabies, WHO, Geneva, 1992, pp. 30-31
- ⁵ Reece, J.F., "Dog and Dog Control in Developing Countries", in Deborah J. Salem and Andrew N. Rowan (eds), *The State of Animals 2005*, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Society Press, Washington DC, 2005, p. 59.
- ⁶ Krishna, Dr Chinny, "ABC responsible for decline in human rabies cases", World Veterinary Service, at <http://www.wvs.org.uk> (accessed on May 20, 2007).
- ⁷ Reece, J.F. op.cit, p.59.

- ⁸ WHO, *Guidelines for Dog Population Management*, p. 9.

⁹ Reece J.F. and Chawla S.K., "Control of Rabies in Jaipur, India by the sterilization and vaccination of neighbourhood dogs", *Veterinary Record*, Journal of the British Veterinary Association, 159 (12), 2006, pp 379-83.

¹⁰ The percentage of stray dogs that have to be vaccinated to end the incidence of rabies. (check)

¹¹ This is really a "guesstimate" based on assumptions. No physical survey has been conducted.

¹² Krishna, Dr. Chinny, op.cit.

¹³ Times News Service, "Zero-rabies city shows the way to small towns: Over80% of the dogs in Chennai have been sterilized: Corpn". *The Times of India*, Chennai edition, June 10, 2009.

¹⁴ Karlekar, Hiranmay, *Savage Humans and Stray Dogs: A Study in Aggression*, Sage, New Delhi, 2008, p.43.

¹⁵ Ibid, p.78.

¹⁶ Charan Sahana and Yasmeen, Afshan, "Rabies vaccine no more dogged by scarcity: Officials at government hospitals say situation is comfortable", *The Hindu*, Bangalore, March 11, 2007.

¹⁷ WHO *Technical Report Series 931*, p.34.

¹⁸ WHO, *Guidelines for Dog Population Management*, p.7. See the part about Nepal and feral dog colony in the Nile delta islands.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁰ Kher, Anuradha, "Who let the dogs out?", *The Times of India* (City Supplements: Pune Times), May 24, 2004. Accessed at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/694045.cms>.

AWBI provides financial aid for implementation of ABC programme in the country. For details, application forms & scheme guidelines, Please visit AWBI's website - www.awbi.org.

AWBI has also brought out a manual entitled "Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Sterilization of Stray Dogs under the Animal Birth Control Programme", which can be obtained on payment of Rs. 100/- from the Board.